1. A per oral or oral, mucoretentive, aqueous liquid, pharmaceutical composition comprising:

(a) from about 2% to about 50%, by weight of the composition, of colloidal particles of silica; and

(b) a safe and effective amount of a pharmaceutical active selected from the group consisting of gastrointestinal agents, analgesics, decongestants, expectorants, antitussives, antihistamines, bronchodilators, topical anesthetics, sensory agents, oral care agents, miscellaneous respiratory agents, and mixtures thereof;

wherein the composition has a sedimentation volume ratio of greater than about 0.90 when measured after about 48 hours, and a triggered viscosity ratio of at least about 1.2.

2. The composition of claim 1 wherein the composition is not further diluted with any liquid prior to administration and the level of silica is from about 3% to about 15%, by weight of the composition.

3. The composition of claim 1 wherein the composition has a sedimentation volume ratio of greater than about 0.95, when measured after about 48 hours.

4. The composition of claim 3 wherein the composition has a sedimentation volume ratio of greater than about 0.98, when measured after about 48 hours.

5. The composition of claim 1 wherein the composition has a triggered viscosity ratio of at least about 1.4.

6. The composition of claim 5 wherein the composition has a triggered viscosity ratio of at least about 1.5.

7. The composition of claim 6 wherein the silica has a mean particle size of less than about 1 micron.

8. The composition of claim 1 wherein the composition has a zero shear viscosity of greater than about 2,000 pascal seconds.

9. The composition of claim 8 wherein the composition has a zero shear viscosity of greater than about 7,500 pascal seconds.

10. The composition of claim 7 wherein the silica is silicon dioxide.

11. The composition of claim 10 wherein the silicon dioxide is selected from the group consisting of fumed silicon dioxide, precipitated silicon dioxide, coacervated silicon dioxide, and gel silicon dioxide.

12. The composition of Claim 1 additionally comprising from 0.005% to 3% citric acid or salt thereof.

13. An intranasal, mucoretentive, aqueous liquid pharmaceutical composition comprising:

(a) from about 2% to about 50%, by weight of the composition, of colloidal particles of silica; and

(b) a safe and effective amount of a pharmaceutical active selected from the group consisting of gastrointestinal agents, analgesics, decongestants, expectorants, antitussives, antihistamines, bronchodilators, topical anesthetics, sensory agents, oral care agents, miscellaneous respiratory agents, and mixtures thereof;

wherein the composition has a sedimentation volume ratio of greater than about 0.90 when measured after about 48 hours, and a triggered viscosity ratio of at least about 1.2.

14. The composition of claim 13 wherein the composition has a sedimentation volume ratio of greater than about 0.95 when measured after about 48 hours.

15. The composition of claim 14 wherein the composition has a sedimentation volume ratio of greater than about 0.98 when measured after about 48 hours.

16. The composition of claim 13 wherein the composition has a triggered viscosity ratio of at least about 1.4.

17. The composition of claim 16 wherein the composition has a triggered viscosity ratio of at least about 1.5.

18. The composition of claim 13 wherein the level of silica is from about 3% to about 15%, by weight of the composition.

19. The composition of claim 18 wherein the silica has a mean particle size of less than about 1 micron.

20. The composition of claim 13 wherein the composition has a zero shear viscosity of greater than about 2,000 pascal seconds.

21. The composition of claim 20 wherein the composition has a zero shear viscosity of greater than about 7,500 pascal seconds.

22. The composition of claim 19 wherein the silica is silicon dioxide.

23. The composition of claim 22 wherein the silicon dioxide is selected from the group consisting of fumed silicon dioxide, precipitated silicon dioxide, coacervated silicon dioxide, and gel silicon dioxide.

24. A method of coating the alimentary canal by administering a safe and effective amount of the composition of claim 1.

25. A method of coating the nasal mucosa by administering a safe and effective amount of the composition of claim 13.

26. A method of preventing or treating symptoms of upper respiratory tract infections or upper respiratory tract tissue irritation or damage, by administering a safe and effective amount of the composition of claim 1.

27. A method of preventing or treating symptoms of upper respiratory tract infections or upper respiratory tract tissue irritation or damage, by administering a safe and effective amount of the composition of claim 13.

28. A method of administering an active agent to the alimentary canal, by administering a safe and effective amount of the composition of claim 1.

29. A method of administering an active agent to the nasal mucosa, by administering a safe and effective amount of the composition of claim 13.